

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 04586 160441Z

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ACTION EA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4586

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, KS

SUBJ: MISSIONARY REACTION TO PRO-ROKG STATEMENT NEW YORK
TIMES (NYT)

1. AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARY REV. STANTON WILSON VISITED EMBASSY JULY 15 TO VOICE CONCERN OVER RECENT PRO-ROKG FULL-PAGE PAID STATEMENT IN NEW YORK TIMES BY SOME KOREAN CHRISTIAN GROUPS. STATEMENT REPORTEDLY MAINTAINED THAT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM EXISTS IN ROK AND ATTACKED MAY 5 CHRISTIAN ANTI-ROKG STATEMENT IN NEW YORK TIMES.

2. EARLIER NATIONAL COUNCIL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES (NCCC) SECRETARY GENERAL KIM KWAN-SUK TOLD EMBOFF THAT GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN PRESSURING NCCC TO MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENT REBUTTING MAY STATEMENT. COUNCIL HAD RESISTED AND WILSON FEELS ROKG SUBSEQUENTLY DIRECTED PRO-GOVERNMENT CHURCHES TO RUN STATEMENT. THEY HAVE LISTED NAMES IN SUCH A WAY AS TO INTENTIONALLY MISREPRESENT SPONSORING GROUPS AS THE MAJOR PROTESTANT ORGANIZATIONS AND CHURCHES IN ROK.

3. WILSON SAID HE HAD BEEN INFORMED OF STATEMENT BY PHONE CALL FROM DR. L. NEWTON THURBER OF NEW YORK. THURBER REPORTEDLY DESIRED TO OBTAIN DETAILS CONCERNING SPONSORS OF STATEMENT. WILSON PROVIDED HIS ASSESSMENT OF GROUPS' SIGNING AS FOLLOWS:

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 04586 160441Z

--HAPDONG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (FAIRLY LARGE ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE

CHURCH WHICH HAS SPLIT WITH MOST OTHER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES IN ROK).

--GENERAL ASSEMBLIES OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES IN KOREA (CONSISTING MAINLY OF THE HAPDONG CHURCH; NOT AN ASSEMBLY OF MOST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES IN ROK.)

--KOREAN COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES (HAPDONG AND TWO OTHER SMALL CHURCHES; NOT THE SAME AS THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES).

--TAEHAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (LOCAL AREA CONGREGATIONS INCLUDING PRO-GOVERNMENT PAENG YANG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH).

--CHRISTIAN TIMES (WEEKLY OF HAPDONG CHURCH)

--KOREA ASSEMBLIES OF GOD (LARGE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH).

4. WILSON SAID THAT HE THINKS NCCC OFFICIALS WILL MEET SHORTLY AFTER RETURN OF KIM KWAN-SUK JULY 16 IN ORDER PLAN RESPONSE TO NYT PROCLAMATION AS WELL AS ACTIONS ON RECENT NFDYS COURT-MARTIAL SENTENCES, ARREST OF CATHOLIC BISHOP CHI, AND REPORTED POSSIBLE COURT-MARTIAL OF YUN PO SUN, AND OTHER PROMINENT CHRISTIAN LEADERS.

5. ACCORDING TO WILSON RECENT HARSH ACTIONS BY GOVERNMENT CAN BE EXPECTED TO REIGNITE PROTESTS FROM CHRISTIANS. HE GAVE EXAMPLE OF RECENT SMALL DEMONSTRATION AT NCCC HEADQUARTERS BY MOTHERS OF KOREAN STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION MEMBERS SENTENCED BY MILITARY COURT. MOTHERS WANTED CHURCH ACTION ON BEHALF OF THEIR SONS. THIS TYPE OF PRESSURE FOR OVERT ACTIONS IS NOW STEADILY BUILDING.

6. COMMENT: NCCC-K CONSIDERS ITSELF AUTHORITATIVE VOICE BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY OF MAINSTREAM PROTESTANT CHURCHES. THUS IT IS CONCERNED OVER ROKG' EFFORTS TO USE DISSIDENT GROUPS WITH SIMILAR NAMES TO CREATE SUSPICION AND MISUNDERSTANDING ABROAD.

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